

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A portable, hand-held system for forming patterns from a sheet of material, comprising:  
a press including first and second members movable toward and away from one another, said first member including a die retaining element associated with a substantially planar die receiving surface thereof; and  
at least one die securable to said first member by said die retaining element, said die comprising a thin, unitary member including a plate and at least one embossing element continuous with a surface of said plate.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein said at least one embossing element protrudes from said surface of said plate.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein said press includes a biasing element for moving at least one of said first and second member toward the other of said first and second member.
4. The system of claim 3, wherein said biasing element includes a pair of pivotally connected handles.
5. The system of claim 3, wherein said biasing element includes a handle that moves relative to a substantially stationary base.
6. The system of claim 1, wherein said die retaining element comprises magnetic material.
7. The system of claim 6, wherein at least said plate comprises a material that is attracted to a magnetic field.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein said die comprises steel.
9. The system of claim 1, wherein said die retaining element mechanically secures said die to said die receiving surface.
10. The system of claim 1, wherein said second member includes at least one of a supporting surface and a receiving die secured thereto and oriented to oppose said die receiving surface.
11. The system of claim 1, wherein said sheet supporting surface of said second member comprises a cushioning element.
12. The system of claim 1, wherein said die further includes at least one cutting edge protruding from said surface.
13. The system of claim 12, wherein said die further includes at least one ejection element between adjacent portions of at least one of said at least one embossing element and said at least one cutting edge.
14. The system of claim 13, wherein said at least one ejection element is compressible and resilient.
15. A method for forming a pattern from a sheet of material, comprising:  
securing a substantially planar die including a plate and at least one embossing element continuous with a surface of said plate to a substantially planar die receiving surface; and manually biasing said substantially planar die and a substantially planar sheet supporting surface located opposite the sheet toward one another and against the sheet by grasping handles of a hand-held embossing apparatus and moving said handles toward one another.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein said providing comprises providing said substantially planar die with said at least one embossing element protruding from said surface of said plate.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said manually biasing comprises manually biasing said substantially planar die against the sheet and a substantially planar sheet supporting surface including at least one recess formed therein and located correspondingly to said at least one embossing element.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein said manually biasing comprises forcing a member carrying said substantially planar die toward said sheet and said substantially planar sheet supporting surface.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said forcing includes applying force to at least one handle of a press associated with said member.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein said forcing comprises squeezing two handle members of a hand-held press toward one another.

21. The method of claim 18, further comprising securing said substantially planar die to said member.

22. The method of claim 15, wherein said providing said substantially planar die comprises providing a substantially planar die further including at least one cutting edge.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein said manually biasing comprises cutting said sheet with said at least one cutting edge.

24. A hand-held system for forming patterns from a sheet of material, comprising: a hand-held press including first and second members movable toward and away from one another, said first member including a die retaining element associated with a substantially planar, substantially uninterrupted die receiving surface thereof; and at least one die securable to said first member by said die retaining element, said die comprising a thin, unitary member including a plate and at least one embossing element continuous with a surface of said plate.

25. The hand-held system of claim 24, wherein said at least one embossing element of said at least one die protrudes from said surface of said plate.

26. The hand-held system of claim 24, wherein said second member includes at least one of a supporting surface and a receiving die secured thereto and oriented to oppose said die receiving surface.

27. A method for forming a pattern from a sheet of material, comprising: securing a substantially planar die including a plate and at least one embossing element continuous with a surface thereof to a substantially planar, substantially uninterrupted die receiving surface; and manually biasing said substantially planar die against the sheet and a substantially planar sheet supporting surface located opposite the sheet with a hand-held press.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein said manually biasing comprises squeezing two hingedly connected members of said hand-held press toward one another.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein said manually biasing comprises forming the pattern so as to include at least one embossed portion.

30. The method of claim 27, wherein said manually biasing comprises forming the pattern so as to include at least one cut portion.

31. A portable, hand-held system for forming patterns from a sheet of material, comprising:  
a press including first and second members moveable toward and away from one another, said first member including a die retaining element associated with a substantially planar die receiving surface thereof; and  
at least one die securable to said first member by said die retaining element, said die comprising a thin, unitary member including a plate, at least one embossing element continuous with a surface of said plate, at least one cutting edge protruding from said surface, and at least one ejection element between adjacent portions of at least one of said at least one embossing element and said at least one cutting edge.

32. The system of claim 31, wherein said at least one embossing element protrudes from said surface of said plate.

33. The system of claim 31, wherein said press includes a biasing element for moving at least one of said first and second member toward the other of said first and second member.

34. The system of claim 33, wherein said biasing element includes a pair of pivotally connected handles.

35. The system of claim 33, wherein said biasing element includes a handle that moves relative to a substantially stationary base.

36. The system of claim 31, wherein said die retaining element comprises magnetic material.

37. The system of claim 36, wherein at least said plate comprises a material that is attracted to a magnetic field.

38. The system of claim 31, wherein said die comprises steel.
39. The system of claim 31, wherein said die retaining element mechanically secures said die to said die receiving surface.
40. The system of claim 31, wherein said second member includes at least one of a supporting surface and a receiving die secured thereto and oriented to oppose said die receiving surface.
41. The system of claim 31, wherein said sheet supporting surface of said second member comprises a cushioning element.
42. The system of claim 31, wherein said at least one ejection element is compressible and resilient.
43. A die for use with a portable system for forming patterns from a sheet of material, comprising:  
a thin, unitary member including a plate;  
at least one embossing element continuous with a surface of said plate;  
at least one cutting edge protruding from said surface; and  
at least one ejection element between adjacent portions of at least one of said at least one embossing element and said at least one cutting edge.
44. The system of claim 43, wherein said at least one ejection element is compressible and resilient.
45. The system of claim 43, wherein said at least one embossing element protrudes from said surface of said plate.

46. The system of claim 43, wherein at least said plate comprises a material that is attracted to a magnetic field.

47. The system of claim 43, wherein each of said plate, said at least one embossing element, and said at least one cutting edge comprises steel.